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Central Intelligence Agency

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

23 May 1983

UN Nuclear Energy Conference Postponed

Summary

The UN Conference on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (PUNE) that had been scheduled for August has been postponed. The Preparatory Committee has been unable to agree on an agenda or on procedures acceptable to both developed and developing countries. The major obstacle is the refusal by some countries, especially India and Argentina, to accept language in the agenda that would ban the use of transferred technology for the development of peaceful nuclear explosions.

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The UN General Assembly probably will call for another preparatory meeting in 1984. Even if that meeting succeeds in overcoming the differences between developed and developing states, an event we believe doubtful, the preparations for PUNE will necessitate scheduling it no sooner than late 1985 and probably not until mid-1986, after the 1985 review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] International Security Issues Division, Office of Global Issues. This analysis is based on information as of 23 May 1983. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to Chief, Weapons Proliferation Branch, OGI, [redacted]

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PUNE Postponed

The UN Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (PUNE) will not convene in August 1983 as originally planned. The Fourth Preparatory Committee, which met in New York between 28 March and 8 April, was unable to draft an agenda or rules of procedure acceptable to both developed and developing states. As a result, the Committee recommended in its report to the UN General Assembly that the PUNE Conference be postponed to a date determined this fall by the 38th General Assembly. On 10 May the General Assembly approved the Committee report. [REDACTED]

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Developed States Positions

Major substantive and procedural differences separated the developed and developing states at the four Preparatory Committee meetings which have taken place.¹ In discussion of potential agenda items, developed countries, led by the United States, have insisted that discussion regarding the access to sensitive nuclear technologies include a recognition of the need to maintain effective safeguards to prevent the development of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. According to reporting by the US Mission at the United Nations, developed states further argue that the necessary role of safeguards must be taken into account in any resolutions dealing with technology transfer adopted during PUNE. To this end, developed states emphasized that the primary role of the IAEA in developing and maintaining effective safeguards must be protected. [REDACTED]

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On a procedural matter, developed states insisted that resolutions reached at PUNE reflect unanimity. Otherwise, despite opposition by some developed states, developing states could use their numerical majority to establish the principles that will govern future international nuclear commerce. [REDACTED]

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¹Since the late-1970s developed and developing states have periodically met in international forums (International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation and the Committee on Assurances of Supply) to establish a nuclear trade regime which would reconcile two seemingly contradictory objectives. Developing states want a regime that would promote the fullest possible transfer of nuclear equipment, materials, and technology for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy from developed to developing states. Developed states stress that such a regime would also have to ensure that these transfers would not directly lead to the proliferation of nuclear explosive capabilities. The PUNE Conference is the latest attempt to reconcile these objectives. [REDACTED]

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During coordination meetings, developed states were for the most part united on these and other issues. Various proposals were offered regarding the timing of PUNE, the definitions of substantive and procedural items, and the kind of voting necessary to pass resolutions according to Embassy reports. We believe these proposals constituted ideas to break the impasse with developing states rather than major differences between the views of developed states. Only on the question of attendance in the event that developing states forced an unacceptable agenda on developed states did any explicit differences emerge. The United States took the position that it would not attend PUNE if the developing states used their voting majority in either the Preparatory Committee or the UN General Assembly to vote through an unacceptable agenda and decisionmaking process. [redacted]

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[redacted] Embassy reporting indicated that Great Britain also expressed reservations about attending in such circumstances, but the Swiss, as hosts, the Belgians, and the Austrians indicated that they planned to attend. The representatives of the other developed states in the West European and Others Group either lacked instructions from their governments on this question or maintained that they hoped that compromise solutions to the outstanding issues could be found, enabling PUNE to be held to everyone's satisfaction. [redacted]

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The Soviets and their allies lent their support to the developed states positions and voted with the United States against a December 1982 UN General Assembly resolution which criticized the Preparatory Committee's lack of progress, implicitly blaming the Committee's problems on the positions taken by developed states. According to US Mission and Embassy reports, Western developed states and the Soviets exchanged views throughout the Preparatory Committee meetings in a cooperative and complementary fashion. [redacted]

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Developing States Positions

Led by India, Argentina, and until recently Yugoslavia, developing states took positions at the Preparatory Committee meetings which differ markedly from those of the developed states. The developing states emphasized that the nonproliferation language of numerous UN resolutions only requires that states refrain from using transferred or indigenous nuclear technology to produce nuclear weapons. By implication, this would permit the use of these technologies to produce peaceful nuclear explosives for engineering projects. As indicated in UN documents, developing states argue that some nuclear suppliers use nonproliferation concerns as an excuse to restrict the transfer of nuclear technology. As a result of this emphasis on nonproliferation, which developing states in general view as

unwarranted, the IAEA with its budget derived primarily from assessments and contributions from developed states, has been unable to provide the nuclear training and aid that these countries maintain is their right. PUNE, in this context, is needed to establish the basic "code of conduct" for nuclear suppliers and recipients alike, under the auspices of the United Nations rather than the IAEA. This "code," developing countries agree, would note that safeguards on transferred technology are necessary, but it would no longer permit developed states to impose unilateral export restrictions. [REDACTED]

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Developing states remained opposed to language being included in the rules of procedure which would require unanimity to pass resolutions on substantive issues. Developed and developing states, during the interval between the Third and Fourth Preparatory Committee meetings and at informal negotiating sessions during the Fourth meeting, discussed various mechanisms to establish a unanimous decisionmaking mechanism without creating a precedent for subsequent UN-sponsored Conferences. Formal discussions were not held at the Fourth Committee meeting because of the time spent on nuclear nonproliferation issues, according to the US Mission. [REDACTED]

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Divisions Among the Developing States

The development of fissures in the positions of developing states was the most noteworthy aspect of the Fourth Preparatory Committee meeting. We believe hardliners, with Argentina and India in the lead but with others such as Brazil and Chile in agreement, appear to have concluded that they preferred not holding PUNE prior to the 1985 NPT Review Conference. It appears that they came to this conclusion when it became apparent that the compromises necessary to get an agreed agenda and rules of procedure meant relinquishing their goal of using PUNE as part of a process to establish a new nuclear economic order favorable to the interests of recipient countries. US mission reporting [REDACTED] indicates that the rigid opposition of these hardliners to a prohibition against using transferred technology for the development of peaceful nuclear explosives alienated other developing states, especially countries such as Egypt, Indonesia, and Yugoslavia, which are NPT signatories and are already constrained by the terms of the Treaty not to use their nuclear facilities to develop either nuclear weapons or peaceful explosive devices. [REDACTED]

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Other developing states, such as Indonesia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Yugoslavia, broke with the Indian position on postponing PUNE to after the NPT Review Conference.

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Outlook

During its fall 1983 meeting, the UN General Assembly, according to the US Mission, will probably call for the convening of a Fifth Preparatory Committee in order to demonstrate that PUNE remains important to developing states. We believe an agreement on the agenda and rules of procedure will still be difficult to

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obtain because both India and Argentina seem intent on blocking progress not only in PUNE but also in the IAEA's Committee on Assurances of Supply. We believe their strategy is to raise the level of confrontation between suppliers and recipient states between now and the 1985 NPT Review Conference so that the Conference will end in failure as it did in 1980. On the basis of Embassy reporting, we have concluded that the hardliners believe success in highlighting what they regard as the inequities of the NPT could revive the developing states' political will to hold PUNE in the context of establishing new nuclear trade conditions favorable to the interests of developing states. [REDACTED]

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